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SKETCHES OF EARLY INDIANA SENATORS—(IV) JOHN TIPTON

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THE Tipton family first appears in history in East Tennessee during the Revolution. Jonathan Tipton was an officer under Sevier at the battle of King's Mountain, and on later campaigns against the Cherokees. An elder brother, John Tipton, was prominent in the struggle to organize the abortive State of Franklin in 1785. His attitude in this matter brought him into violent opposition to John Sevier, who at the time opposed the new community separating from North Carolina. He was one of the deputies chosen to frame a constitution for the new commonwealth, of which convention Joseph Tipton was also a member. They sat with such men as Reverent Samuel Houston, James Montgomery, George Maxwell, and John Blair. The people soon tired of this new government and decided to return to the allegiance of North Carolina. At an election for members to represent Washington county in the North Carolina Assembly, held at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga river, Col. John Tipton was elected senator. This brought on a conflict with the new State of Franklin. Its Governor, John Sevier, at once singled out Colonel Tipton as the head of this rebellion. A bitter feud arose between these men. Tipton held court for the State of North Carolina at Buffalo, ten miles from Jonesboro, where the Franklin Supreme Court sat. Tipton headed a party, raided the court of Franklin at Jonesboro, and carried off the records. Sevier retaliated by seizing the court records in Tipton's county, Washington. These raids and counter raids were repeated so often that all semblance of regular courts disappeared.

By the year 1787 Tipton and Sevier had become implacable enemies. A compromise engineered by Evan Shelby permitted citizens of the community to own allegiance to either government. During this year, 1787, John Tipton was colonel and justice of the peace of Washington county. He was, with James Stuart and John Blair, elected representative to the North Carolina Assembly of that year, held at Tarborough. The conflict between Tipton and Sevier was growing more bitter. August 27, 1787, Tipton raided the courts of Franklin at Mulberry Grove and a rumor was started that he

had captured Governor Sevier. It was said that 1,500 mountaineers were under arms in a few hours to rescue their governor.

Early in 1788 a sheriff, acting under a *fieri facias* from the State of North Carolina, seized Governor Sevier's negroes and took them to Tipton's house for safe keeping. Sevier, who was then in the mountains fighting the Cherokee Indians, returned and laid siege to Tipton's house on Sinking creek, a branch of Watauga, ten miles east of Jonesboro. A kind of half-hearted battle followed in a snow storm in which no one attempted to kill another. Sevier, however, was worsted and his two sons fell into the hands of Tipton. A short time later Sevier himself was arrested and sent to Morganton, Burke county, North Carolina, on a charge of treason, but was rescued by his friends and returned to Jonesboro. The Legislature of North Carolina, to the disgust of Tipton, then a member, acquitted Sevier of the charge of treason and he took his seat as a representative, the State of Franklin having entirely collapsed by March, 1788.

Nothing more appears of the Tiptons until the spring of 1790, when President Washington called on Governor Blount, of the Southwest Territory, to furnish 200 troops to General St. Clair for his expedition against the Miami Indians. Capt. Jacob Tipton commanded a company. He was killed November 4, 1791, at St. Clair's defeat.

In 1793 the Southwest Territory was advanced to the Second Stage. In the first Assembly John Tipton represented Washington county. John Sevier was nominated by this body and appointed by the president as a councillor. Both Tipton and Sevier appeared as trustees of Washington College, to be established at Salem, in Washington county. Again, in 1796, John Tipton was elected a delegate from his county to the Constitutional Convention at Knoxville, serving on the committee that drafted the constitution. On the 6th day of the succeeding February he was chosen a senator from his county, while Sevier became the first governor of the State.

A new county, Carter, was established by the Legislature by dividing Washington, and the first court was held at the home of Samuel Tipton. John Tipton appeared at the same time as a trustee of the new town of Jonesboro. A short time later Governor Sevier appointed John Tipton a magistrate for Washington county. In August, 1797, Sevier was reelected governor and Tipton a State senator. Tipton was not a member of the next Assembly and we have no further record of him. The ill-feeling between him

and Sevier lasted till his death, no doubt, as he was the leading prosecutor of Sevier in the Fraudulent Land-Warrants case. Jackson took sides with Tipton. Samuel and John Tipton were both on the Legislative committee that investigated this affair.

General Jacob Tipton, son of Captain Jacob Tipton, killed at St. Clair's defeat, moved west in 1821 and was one of the first settlers in Tipton county, Tennessee, a county named for the victim of St. Clair's blunder.

The exact relationship of John, Samuel, Jonathan, Jacob, and Joshua Tipton cannot now be determined, but some, and perhaps all, were brothers. Their father is said to have come from Maryland. John seems to have been the oldest and most influential. He owned a large estate on Sinking creek near Jonesboro, East Tennessee, and associated on equal terms with President Jackson, Hugh L. White, John Sevier, Isaac Shelby, James Robertson and Senator Blount. There is no doubt as to the enmity between him and Sevier but there is no reason to believe that Sevier ever did him any such injury as tradition has preserved.

The story that Sevier encouraged the Indians to murder Joshua Tipton, the father of the Senator Tipton, of Indiana, is unfounded, and cannot be believed by anyone who appreciates the character of Sevier. On the other hand, Gilmore, in his *John Sevier, a Commonwealth Builder*, misstates the facts and without reason criticises John Tipton of Tennessee.

These details have been given at some length to show the surroundings of John Tipton, who lived in this vicinity till he was of age. He perhaps had as good an education as could be had in the community.

For some cause or other many of the Tiptons left their old home around Jonesboro about the close of the Eighteenth century and again sought the border. One of them, Abraham Tipton, was a volunteer under George Rogers Clark. Another settled in Ohio, a third, as noted above, moved west to Tipton county, Tennessee.¹

In 1807 John Tipton, the Senator from Indiana, came north and settled in Harrison county, Indiana. His father had been murdered in Tennessee about 1793. There were two sisters, a half-brother and his mother in the Tipton family when they located at Brinley's Ferry. He purchased 50 acres of land here and established a home, paying for it by making rails. As required by law he joined the

¹ These details of the Tipton family have been gathered principally from Ramsay, *Annals of Tennessee*.

militia, becoming a member of Captain Spier Spencer's Yellow Jackets. It was as an ensign in this regiment that he participated in the Tippecanoe campaign. He has left us an account of this in his journal, which was published in a former volume of this MAGAZINE.² He was promoted to the command of his company on the death of his commander at Tippecanoe. On his return he entered with all his energy into the defense of the frontier, which at that time was along the course of Driftwood or the East Branch of White river. He made his headquarters at Fort Vallonia.

The story of his campaigns against the Indians would fill a volume. June 30, 1812, he received a call from the farmers of White river at Driftwood Ford for help against the Indians. He started in July with nine men; five more followed in a few days. When he got there, Tipton found that the Indians, hearing of his coming, had all left the settlement. His name was enough to fill them with terror, as he was known as an unerring marksman. This expedition occupied twenty days.

The Battle of Tipton's Island, fought March 23, 1813, is famous in the history of Jackson county. In the fall of 1811 the Indians along the White river had entered into a treaty with the United States, ceding the territory south of an imaginary line beginning at the banks of the Whitewater, where Brookville is now located, and running in a southwestern direction toward the Wabash river. After this treaty was made, many families had moved into Southern Indiana and established their homes there.

The Indians violated this treaty and began to raid farms, and to steal horses and stock. The lives of the settlers were not safe. March 18, 1813, a party of pioneers at Fort Vallonia were attacked by hostile Indians while returning from a trip to the forest. A man by the name of Sturgeon was killed and four were wounded.

A call was issued to Tipton, who was then located at Fort Vallonia. He started with 29 men the next morning; March 23 he overtook a company of Delawares and Shawnees in the bottom land along the White river. The Indians fled, crossed the river on a large drift and reached the end of an island. Tipton's men began firing as soon as they saw the Indians and the latter returned the fire. When the rangers reached the island Tipton divided his forces, and surprised the enemy so by this movement that they abandoned

² Volume II, p. 170, reprinted from the *Indianapolis News* of May 5, 1879. The manuscript is now in the hands of Mr. John H. Holliday, Indianapolis, formerly editor and proprietor of the *News*.

the fight. One Indian was killed and several wounded, while trying to swim to safety. The soldiers pursued the savages into what is now Lawrence county. None of Tipton's men were killed or wounded. From this battle the island has ever since been called Tipton's Island.

An incident of this battle shows what kind of a disciplinarian Tipton was. He had commanded absolute silence from all his men, but one big fellow insisted on talking. Tipton took away his gun, tied him to a tree and let him stay there awhile, with bullets flying around him. He was soon glad enough to promise to be still.

The following letter to Acting-Governor Gibson, written April 24, 1813, and giving a resume of his actions up to this date, during his command at Fort Vallonia, will give some idea of this part of Tipton's life:

"Since I have had command of the militia stationed on the frontier of Harrison and Clark counties, there has been much mischief done in those counties, of which I have made a correct report to Col. Robert M. Evans, believing it his duty to make report to you. On the 18th of March one man was killed and three wounded near this place (Vallonia). At that time I was not here. On my return I took twenty-nine men and went up Driftwood twenty-five miles. I met a party of Indians on an island in the river—a smart skirmish took place; and in twenty minutes I defeated them; killed one dead on the ground and saw some sink in the river; and I believe all that made their escape by swimming the river, if any done so, lost their guns. I lost no men killed or wounded. On the 16th instant two men were killed and one wounded eight miles southwest of this place, and five horses stolen. I immediately took thirty-one men and followed them three days, notwithstanding we had five large creeks to raft, and many to wade waist deep, and every day heavy rain. The third day I directed my spies to march slow (as my horses were much fatigued) and not try to overtake them until night. But contrary to my orders they came up with one who had stopped to fix his pack and fired on him. From his motions they think him mortally wounded, as he fell, but raised and run away. They all left their horses and other plunder; and the ground being hilly we could not catch them, as they were on high hills and we were in a deep hollow except the spies. Had it not been for my orders being disobeyed, I would certainly have killed them all at their camp the ensuing night. On their way out they passed the Saline Salt creek, and there took an old trail leading direct to the Delaware towns; and

it is my opinion that while the Government is supporting one part of that tribe the other is murdering our citizens.

"It is much to be desired that those rascals, of whatever tribe they be, harboring about those towns should be routed, which could be done with one hundred men in seven days. If there is not effective measures taken to guard this place the whole of Clark and Harrison counties will break. It is rumored that when the militia come out the rangers will be dismissed. If so our case is a dangerous one as it is hard for mounted men to range through the swamps and backwater of Driftwood and Muscatituck rivers as they have been, most of the season, more than a mile wide, by reason of low marshy bottoms that overflow, and many times three or four miles wide. They (the Indians) come in and secrete themselves on some high ground surrounded with water, and by help of bark canoes come in and do mischief, and until I came out could not be found. Since I came out they have made two attempts to take off the horses. The first time on the 12th instant, I took all their horses but one; the last I took all and followed them with footmen. The last time we lived three days on a little venison, without bread or salt; and I believe if there are to be rangers there should be spies of young and hardy footmen who could lay and scout through the swamps and thickets like the Indians do, and then we'll be secure—not else. I have been constantly out for the last eight days, on foot, wading and rafting the creeks; have seen much signs of Indians, such as camps where they have lain, killed hogs and cattle to live on, and made many canoes to approach our settlements; and I am conscious if you had not ordered out the additional companies and made those excellent arrangements of the 9th of February, the whole frontier would have been murdered ere now. The citizens are now living between hope and despair waiting to know their doom."³

During the first half of the year 1813 the Indians were troublesome in northern Indiana. Tipton accompanied several expeditions against them. By the middle of the summer all signs of trouble had disappeared. At the declaration of peace at the close of the War of 1812, Tipton, for his services, was promoted by President Monroe to the rank of brigadier-general. He then returned to his home in Harrison county and began his career in public life.

Tipton had been appointed justice of the peace of Harrison county

³ Daniel McDonald, *History of Freemasonry in Indiana*. Indianapolis, 1898. Published by the Grand Lodge.

June 20, 1811.⁴ At the first election under the State constitution, August, 1816, he was elected sheriff. He was afterwards reelected and served until August, 1819, when he was elected representative to the State Legislature from Harrison county.

January 11, 1820, the Legislature appointed George Hunt, John Conner, John Gilliland, Stephen Ludlow, Joseph Bartholomew, John Tipton, Jesse B. Durham, Frederick Rapp, William Prince and Thomas Emerson commissioners to locate the new capital for the State. May 17, 1820, Tipton, with Governor Jennings, started from Corydon on this mission.

On this trip to select the capital Tipton kept a journal of the trip, and it shows a remarkable improvement in spelling and writing over the journal he kept on his campaign to Tippecanoe.⁵

At the August election, 1821, Tipton was reelected to the State Legislature from his county. In the following session he was appointed commissioner by the Legislature of Indiana to meet the commissioner from Illinois and establish the boundary line between the two States. The work was done the following summer, and although Tipton insisted that there was an error, and that the site of Chicago should be in Indiana, the report was ratified by the Legislature at the session of 1822-23.

In March, 1823, Tipton was appointed by President Monroe general agent for the Pottawatomie and Miami Indians in northern Indiana. He moved to Fort Wayne, where the agency was located, living then in a block house. He was the moving spirit in the agitation for the formation of a new county, of which Fort Wayne was to be the county seat.⁶

A bill was passed and approved December 17, 1823, to form a new county out of Randolph and Delaware counties. At the suggestion of Tipton it was provided that the new county should be called Allen, in honor of Col. John Allen, of Kentucky, who had been killed January 22, 1813, at the battle of the River Raisin.

May 27, 1824, Tipton was appointed county agent and filed his bond for \$5,000 with Alexander Ewing and Samuel Hanna as sureties. He had as a part of his duties the sale of the lands deeded to the county in consideration of the location of the county seat at that place.

⁴ *Executive Journal*, p. 174.

⁵ Tipton's Journal was printed in the *Indiana Magazine of History* in the March and June issues of 1905. The substance of this is given by John H. Benton in an article in the *Brownstown Banner* October 15, 1913.

⁶ *History of the Upper Maumee*, II, p. 374.

In 1826, while he was agent at Fort Wayne, Tipton, together with General Lewis Cass and Governor James B. Ray, was appointed by President Adams to negotiate a treaty with the Miamis and Pottawatomies for their lands. Tipton was chosen because of his success in dealing with, and his wide personal acquaintance with the red men.

A treaty was made with the Pottawatomies, October 16, 1826, by which they ceded a strip of land 100 feet wide for a road from Lake Michigan to the Wabash, and one section of land contiguous to the road for each mile of the same. This land was to be sold and the money used for the construction of the Michigan Road, a great project in those days of difficult travel. In 1827 Congress passed an act authorizing the road, and January 24, 1828, the State Legislature provided for its survey. By February, 1832, the road had been opened from the Ohio river through Indianapolis to Logansport, and in 1834 the work was completed, and the road opened.

A treaty was made by these same commissioners, October 23, 1826, with the Miamis, by which they ceded to the United States all claims of land north and west of the Wabash and Miami rivers and reaffirmed the cession that had been made by the treaty at St. Mary's October 6, 1818. By these two treaties these two tribes ceded all their lands in the northwest part of the State, excepting individual reservations. Thus the wars that had been a perpetual menace to the settlers were brought to an end.

On March 28, 1828, Tipton moved the Indian agency from Fort Wayne to the Wabash river, opposite the mouth of Eel river, thinking this a more central point. Here Alexander Chamberlain, familiarly known as "Aleck," had built a cabin and later a double two-story hewed-log building, which he used as a tavern. Tipton established his headquarters at the tavern, which he bought April 3, 1829, together with the tract of land it was on, for \$725. He then put up other buildings for the agency. One of these was the little one-story frame house, with a porch in front, standing a few feet to the west. After Tipton had moved with his agency to this place houses were built rapidly and there was soon quite a settlement. When the question of naming the village arose, Tipton, with a reverence of an educated man for the classics, preferred a Latin compound meaning "Mouth of the Eel," but was overruled.

Early in September, 1828, the citizens of this little town of Logansport began to consider the subject of education. Five hundred dollars was raised for the purpose of starting a seminary, of which amount Tipton paid \$150. September 27, 1828, a meeting of citizens

was held to appoint a committee on building and organization. The "Eel River Seminary" was incorporated January 1, 1829, with Tipton as its first president.⁷

Tipton had a great deal to do with the growth and prosperity of Logansport. He built the first flouring mill erected in the vicinity in 1828. It was called Forest Mill and was at first a saw mill. He was interested in constructing school houses and raising money to pay the teachers. He was interested in the original plat of the town, being at the same time proprietor of four additions which he laid out August 3, 1833; June 8, 1835; October 5, 1835; and October 27, 1835. Moreover, he was at the head of almost every movement for the improvement and progress of Cass county. It may be truly said that Logansport owes more to him than to any other man.

Some interesting letters that show John Tipton's character were printed in the Indianapolis *Indiana Journal* in December, 1829, while he was Indian agent. The people of Cass county had published an address in the *Indiana Journal* of October 29, 1829, on the subject of the Wabash and Erie Canal and the Michigan Road. John Ewing, State senator from Knox county, in reply, published a letter in the same paper, November 21, 1829, to the citizens of Indiana. In this letter he claimed that the people of Cass county were interested in the progress of the Wabash Canal and the Michigan Road, because they would benefit them most. He advocated selling the lands along the canal for credit instead of for cash, as the latter policy would prevent a great many people from buying, and thus hinder the building of the canal.

This was too much for Tipton. He immediately wrote a letter, which was printed in the Logansport *Pottawatomie and Miami Times*, and on December 8, 1829, in the Indianapolis *Indiana Journal* "by request." It was addressed to John Ewing and signed "Keep Dark John." In this letter he accused Ewing of wanting to sell the canal lands on credit so as to get the people in debt, and thus secure a job as loan commissioner. This credit system, however, he said, was not Ewing's scheme originally but that of a man of high standing who was using him as a "cat's paw." "In all societies, John," Tipton went on to say, "old maids are allowed their cats, parrots and canary birds; old bachelors their whims, hobbies and gouty spleens, and you must in charity be allowed yours. But, sir, the road and canal are great State objects, nor shall you ride them, John, unless you ride them fair." He accused Ewing of having a temper that

⁷ Helm, *History of Cass County, Indiana*.

made him imagine all men his enemies, while the men he so considered, though annoyed by Ewing's conduct, regarded him as such a nonentity that they could look on him only with pity and contempt. He also charged Ewing with having deceived the Indians in the treaty with the Miamis and Pottawatomies in 1826. He closed with a story about a speculator, a man high in office, who rode an old lame horse to an Indian treaty. This horse had all the ailments a horse could have. Finding that the horse was about to die, he got an Indian interpreter to influence another Indian, in return for some whiskey, to ask the commissioners for the poor lame horse. The commissioners were made to believe that unless the Indian got this horse negotiations would fail. They, therefore, ordered it to be valued very high and paid for out of the public money. The letter ended thus: "Was this transaction fair? Was the seller a citizen of Cass or Logansport? No, no, would you believe it, John, he was a citizen of ould Knoax."

In the Indianapolis *Journal* of December 16, 1829, Ewing attacked Tipton. He had applied to the *Journal* for the name of the person who "requested" the publication of "Keep Dark John" and found that it was Tipton himself. He spoke of the "vulgar ribaldry and wilful falsehood" of the letter and refuted it. In the same issue of the *Journal* he published a letter of his to Tipton, who was then in Indianapolis, in which he asked the latter to prove the charges he had made. Tipton would not commit himself, but asked Ewing to come to his room. This Ewing refused to do. Tipton left Indianapolis the next day without answering Ewing's last letter. Ewing published in this same issue of the Indianapolis *Journal* letters from James B. Ray, Governor of Indiana, who had been one of the commissioners at the treaty in question, James Gregory and William Connor. All these men disclaimed any knowledge of unfair dealings on Ewing's part at the treaty in 1826. Ewing went on to accuse Tipton of unfairness as an Indian agent, by means of which he had grown wealthy.

Tipton, on the day he left town, had heard that Ewing was to attack him in the *Journal*. He wrote a letter to the *Journal*, in which he said that if "John" had only called on him, or if he could consider him a gentleman worthy of notice, he would show the world that the half had not been told. However, Ewing was not worthy of notice, "Nor will I take any further notice On Paper of his writings or sayings. His pen or his tongue, where he is known, is no slander: suffice it therefore to say that it is John Ewing."

When James Noble, United States Senator from Indiana, died, February 26, 1831, Governor Ray appointed Robert Hanna to fill the vacancy. Soon after this a movement was started on foot to have the Legislature elect Tipton to the United States Senate. He received many letters on the subject. In a letter to Dr. James H. Stewart, of Delphi, July 23, 1831, he expressed his preference for the situation of Indian agent, which he then held. He said he was not seeking office and would regard it as a sacrifice of peace and property. His talent, he did not think, was of the kind that should be in the United States Senate.⁸

Tipton finally gave way to the entreaties of his friends and allowed his name to go before the Legislature as a candidate. The election took place December 8 and 9, 1831. The first six ballots were taken December 8 and the last ballot the next day. On the first ballot, Samuel Judah, received 36 votes, Jesse L. Holman, 23 Thomas L. Blake 23, James Rariden 16, Jonathan Jennings 3, John Tipton 1, John Test 1, not voting 2. On the second ballot he received 4 votes, on the third 10, and increased until the seventh, when he was elected by a vote of 55. Judah received 3, Holman 36, Blake 5, Rariden 1, and Milton Stapp 3, on the last ballot.

Tipton took his seat in the United States Senate January 3, 1832. In this session he had a great deal to say on the subject of Indian affairs, and pioneer that he was, showed his knowledge of Indian character.

May 28, 1832, when the bill for appropriations for the Indian department for 1832 was up in the Senate, Tipton moved to amend the bill by striking out the proviso that no part of the appropriation should be used to reward Indians for settling disputes among themselves. He thought it was better to bribe the Indians by means of a few blankets if bloodshed could thus be avoided. Most of the Senators were opposed to this giving of bribes, as they called it. Tipton's amendment was lost by a vote of 7 to 34.⁹

May 31, of the same year, Tipton discussed the Indian war then raging in Indiana. This war, he said, was due to the encroachment of the white men on the lands of the Indians, whose complaints had not been listened to by the Government.¹⁰

June 9, 1832, Tipton introduced a bill in the Senate authorizing the President to raise five companies of rangers for the protection

⁸ Dr. James H. Stewart, *Recollections of Carroll County*, p. 134.

⁹ *Congressional Debates*, VIII, p. 978.

¹⁰ *Congressional Debates*, VIII, p. 991.

of the frontiers. He showed how necessary such a band of men was for the safety of the frontiers. Ordinary soldiers, he argued, would not do for this service. They needed men who were acquainted with the habits of the Indians, who had been raised on the frontier with a rifle in their hands. He urged the immediate passage of the bill, as the lives of the people on the frontier were in danger at this time. At least 500 rangers were necessary to keep peace. "An Indian has no love for the American people. Missions, teachers, preachers sent to them have not civilized them nor will the long prayers made nor the hypocritical hands held up in eastern cities in behalf of the poor Indians have much effect in warding off scalping-knives from our heads."¹¹ Tipton prophesied that if help was not immediately sent to the frontier the pioneers would take matters in their own hands and exterminate the Indians from the Tippecanoe river to the Mississippi before another year. Then the East would say that the western people "had murdered the poor Indians." Tipton's bill was passed in a slightly modified form.¹²

At the next session of Congress Tipton was placed on the Committees on Military Affairs and Public Lands.¹³

He was re-elected January 5, 1833, on the nineteenth ballot, receiving 54 votes, Dewey 9, Patterson 11, McCarty 16, scattering 14. On the last ballot 30 National Republican votes were given to Tipton.¹⁴

December 16, 1833, Tipton was placed on the Committees on Military Affairs, Indian Affairs and Claims. During all the remaining time that he was in the Senate he served on these committees. In 1837, after Hendricks had left the Senate, Tipton took his place as chairman of the Committee on Roads and Canals.¹⁵

Tipton, like all Western men, did all he could to help on the building of roads and canals. In 1833 he introduced a series of resolutions regarding the building of harbors on Lake Michigan.¹⁶ The next year he introduced a resolution regarding the improvement of the navigation of the Wabash. At the time he presented the resolution he spoke of a bill with this same object which had been vetoed at the last session by Jackson. This attitude of the President

¹¹ *Congressional Debates*, VIII, p. 1075.

¹² *Congressional Debates*, VIII, p. 1076.

¹³ *Congressional Debates*, IX, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Niles' Register*, XLIII, p. 301.

¹⁵ *Congressional Debates*, X, p. 43.

¹⁶ *Congressional Debates*, X, p. 50.

he thought was due to the misunderstanding of the importance of the matter. He closed by saying that no man need expect the votes of more than one-fourth of the men in the Mississippi valley at the next Presidential election if he was opposed to the improvement of rivers.¹⁷

In a speech, December 24, on the same subject, Tipton mentioned the attacks that had been made on him by the *Congressional Globe* for the purpose, he avowed, of arraying the Jackson party in Indiana against him. The Washington (D. C.) *Globe* insinuated that Tipton's interest in improving the Wabash was due to the fact that he owned a great deal of land along that river. Tipton closed as follows: "If any persons have charges to prefer against me, let them be brought forward. I stand ready to meet them at all times and in all places. I have no favors to ask; but if it is expected to deter me from my duty by such attacks, they are mistaken. I shall vote according to my own sense of right, without being driven from my course by threats or insinuations."¹⁸

Tipton, like Hendricks, tried to get appropriations every year for the National Road. February 26, 1836, in the debate on the National Road bill, Clay opposed the bill. Tipton was sorry to see his old friend separating from him on a vote over internal improvements. Clay had remarked that it was strange that Hendricks and Tipton asked for appropriations for the road when the whole system of internal improvements had been abandoned by the Democratic administrations. To this Tipton replied, in characteristic fashion, that in his support of any administration he would go with them no farther than they followed the course he thought was honorable and to the interest of his country. "I look to the wishes of a majority of my constituents and to my judgment of what is right and wrong for the rule of my conduct here, and not to the will of a chief magistrate, or of any other individual, public or private. I care not who is president of the United States. If he administers the Government agreeably to the constitution and the laws he has a right to expect my support and on no other terms."¹⁹

On the public land questions Tipton agreed with Hendricks in favoring "graduation." January 23, 1837, he moved an amendment to Clay's Land Bill, providing for "graduation." This amendment was lost January 24.²⁰

¹⁷ *Congressional Debates*, XI, p. 13.

¹⁸ *Congressional Debates*, XI, p. 70.

¹⁹ *Congressional Debates*, XII, p. 619.

²⁰ *Congressional Debates*, XIII, p. 530.

Tipton's views on the subject of the tariff can be seen in his speech February 25, 1837, on the bill to reduce the duties on certain imported articles. At this time he said he thought American statesmen in their legislation ought to think not merely of revenue, but also of protection for American industry. Clay that could be used to make the finest china was to be found in Indiana; the blankets given to Indians at treaties could be made also in his own State if the Government would protect the wool. He was in favor of abolishing the duties on articles used by the poor, but he wanted the rich to pay the duty on luxuries.²¹

Tipton believed that the army of the United States was not large enough. February 5, 1836, he introduced a resolution looking toward an increase in the army. His idea was that the surest way to prevent war was to prepare for it. There were not enough troops at this time to occupy all the military posts. A bill was reported and passed the Senate June 21, but did not become a law.²²

At the first session of the Fifteenth Congress, which was held September 4 to October 16, 1837, Van Buren's plan of a Sub-Treasury system was taken up. In the debate on this question, September 23, Tipton expressed the belief that the cause of the panic of that year was Jackson's unfortunate tampering with the currency and the public deposits.²³ He disapproved of the Sub-Treasury bill, as it would give too much power to the executive. The regulation of the currency and the deposits of public money he thought should be under laws passed by Congress and not left to the President and Secretary of the Treasury.²⁴ Speaking of the bills for the issue of treasury notes and collection from deposit banks which had passed the Senate, he remarked that if these bills became laws, he would be glad to go back to his masters, the people, and find out what they wanted done further. "I do not stand here," he said, "to register the executive will, but look to the boys of the West, those with hard hands, warm hearts and strong arms, who fell the forest, hold the plough and repel foreign invasion, for my instructions. It is their wishes and interests that I came here to represent."²⁵

In 1838 a bill to organize the Indians who were living west of Missouri and Arkansas into a territory was presented in the Senate.

²¹ *Congressional Debates*, XIII, p. 978.

²² *Congressional Debates*, XII, p. 387.

²³ *Congressional Debates*, XIV, p. 244.

²⁴ *Congressional Debates*, XIV, p. 247.

²⁵ *Congressional Debates*, XIV, p. 247.

Tipton was anxious for this bill to pass. He thought the Indians were capable of a high state of civilization if they were given a government and lands suited to them. Senator King of Alabama proposed as an amendment to the bill that all the country west of the Mississippi and north of the Missouri river to which the Indian title was extinguished be set apart for the northern Indians.²⁶ Tipton objected to this amendment because he did not wish to see another slave State made out of this territory. He spoke reluctantly on the subject of slavery into which he had been drawn. The extension of slavery, he said, into territory where it did not already exist, he decidedly opposed. However, he had no sympathy with the Abolition movement. He did not believe in disturbing the people of the slaveholding States in their rights of property. If people wanted to live in slave States they could settle south of the line of the Missouri Compromise, or north of it if they preferred to live in a free State.²⁷

In his circular to the people of Indiana, written from Washington on the last day of the first session of the Twenty-Fourth Congress, Tipton mentioned the subject of the annexation of Texas, which had been discussed in Congress. Tipton was not in favor of annexation, as he thought the climate of Texas might cause the people to use slave labor. "While we should scrupulously refrain from interfering with this institution in the States of our Union where it now exists, we should also be careful to do nothing that will tend to its further propagation among us."²⁸

Some further quotations from this circular will show the matters before Congress in which Tipton took most interest:

It has been a question of much interest how this large surplus [from the sale of public lands] could be constitutionally disposed of. Much of the time of this session has been spent in discussion upon this subject and at a late day a law regulating the deposits of the public money was passed. The law provides that after leaving in the treasury of the United States five millions of dollars the surplus is, on the first of January, 1837, to be deposited with such of the several States as shall by law authorize their treasurer or competent authority to receive the same, in proportion to their respective representation in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. . . . The portion that Indiana will receive will probably equal one million dollars. The circulation of this money, together with the large sums flowing into our country from abroad, will unquestionably make the money market easy, and will enable the Fund Commissioners to procure the necessary funds to carry

²⁶ *Congressional Globe*, IV, p. 315.

²⁷ *Congressional Globe*, VI, p. 347.

²⁸ *Logansport Canal Telegraph*, August 6, 1836.

on our public works. Our portion of the Surplus Revenue will enable Indiana to push forward her great schemes of Internal Improvement with spirit and economy.

A bill establishing a number of new post routes in all the States became a law. In this Indiana has been amply provided for. All the routes asked for by our citizens, so far as I know, have been established; and in the northern part of the State, I procured the insertion of some new routes on which it may not be necessary to put the mail at this time. The routes from Fort Wayne via Turkey Creek Prairie to Ottawa; from Peru to Sparta, and that from Strawtown via Camden to Delphi, may be of this class.²⁹

An appropriation of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars was made for the continuation of the Cumberland Road in Indiana, and for procuring materials for a bridge over the Wabash at Terre Haute. Twenty thousand dollars were also appropriated for the commencement of a harbor at Michigan City. A bill passed the Senate, but was left among the unfinished business of the House of Representatives authorizing the purchase by the United States of the stock owned by individuals in the Louisville and Portland Canal, for the purpose of relieving the navigation of the Ohio from the payment of extravagant tolls to the Canal Company.

The bill appropriating fifty thousand dollars to improve the navigation of the Wabash was not finally acted on by the House of Representatives, although it passed the Senate at an early day of the session.

Treaties have been lately concluded by Colonel A. C. Pepper with the Pottawatomie tribe of Indians for most of their land in our State. These treaties have been ratified by the President and Senate, and there now remains no doubt that these Indians will very soon remove to their new homes west of the Mississippi, stipulations to that effect having been embraced in each treaty.

I regret to state that our repeated attempts at negotiation with the Miamis have been, as yet, unsuccessful. In 1832 an appropriation was made by Congress and commissioners appointed who endeavored to purchase the land belonging to the tribe; but they did not succeed. In 1833 commissioners were again appointed by the President, one of whom was the agent for the Miamis. . . . They spent some time and a considerable amount of money, but without effecting a purchase. The next year the delegation in Congress from the State requested the Executive to make another effort, and in the fall of that year articles of a treaty were signed by the Indians, ceding a small portion of their lands, but reserving from sale some of the best and most valuable tracts, situated on and near the line of our canal. The President made objections to this treaty and refused to submit it to the Senate for ratification. I was anxious that it might be ratified, because I considered it the best that could be obtained. As some have asserted that I was opposed to its ratification, I annex a copy of my letter of the 15th day of June to the Secretary of War on that subject and his reply thereto.

“Washington, June 15, 1836.

“Sir: A report has been circulated to my prejudice in Indiana, that I opposed the ratification of the Treaty, negotiated by General Marshall, with the

²⁹ This business of establishing post roads was the “pork barrel” of the Congressmen of that day.

Miami tribe of Indians in October, 1834. To enable me to disabuse the public mind on that subject, and to establish the falsehood of the charge, I am compelled to ask you to state the substance of a conversation that took place between the President of the United States, you, and myself, the morning after you requested an interview with the delegation from Indiana respecting that treaty. Be good enough to state whether I did not inform the President and yourself that I was anxious to ratify each and every part of that treaty, except the provision making it the duty of the President to purchase from the State of Indiana for the Indians, a strip of land, six chains in width, granted by the Treaty of 1826, for the purpose of constructing roads, or canals, through Indian reservations, and whether I have not frequently expressed this to be my intention and wishes.

"Your obedient servant,

"Hon. Lewis Cass, Secretary of War."

"JOHN TIPTON.

Secretary Cass answered June 30:

"Sir: In answer to your letter I have the honor to inform you that my recollection of your views respecting the ratification of the Miami Treaty coincides with your statement. I have conversed with the President on the subject to-day and this also is his opinion.

"Your obedient servant,

"Gen. John Tipton, Senate."

"LEWIS CASS.

December 7, 1837, Tipton presented a petition from citizens of Indiana, residing in Miami county, praying Congress to pass a law granting pre-emption rights to the lands along the canal, ceded by the Miamis at the treaty in 1834. This resolution was referred to the Committee on Public Lands, and a bill was reported. In this debate, January 25, 1838, Tipton opposed Senator O. H. Smith, of Indiana, who thought that as these lands had been given to aid the State in internal improvements, pre-emption rights should not be granted. Tipton spoke of the suffering the settlers in these lands had undergone while penetrating the forests, cutting down the trees, and breaking the soil, to show that they were entitled to pre-emption.³⁰

The Legislature of Indiana, a few days before the close of the session of 1838, introduced a resolution of censure on the subject of the vote given by Tipton on the Pre-emption Bill, pronouncing this a violation of the trust confided in him. This resolution was adopted by a vote of 34 to 8, Senator John Ewing, of Knox, Tipton's former enemy, being one of the few to vote against it.³¹

As soon as Tipton heard of this resolution he replied in a letter to the Indianapolis *Indiana Democrat* saying that he had been in public life for more than a quarter of a century and this was the

³⁰ *Congressional Globe*, VI, p. 137.

³¹ *Logansport Herald*, March 1, 1838.

first time that he had been charged with the violation of public duty from a respectable source. He thought it strange that he was to be censured because he had had a difference of opinion from Senator Smith. He had received a letter informing him that one senator who voted for the resolution had done so because he had been informed that Tipton had chosen the best parts of the Miami lands, and put persons there to make improvements so that he might claim them under the pre-emption laws. This charge, he declared, was false. Tipton went on to say that he had never begged his seat in the Senate; on the contrary, he was anxious to retire from public life and firmly intended to do so at the end of his term. He closed his letter as follows: "I would scorn to hold a seat in the United States Senate one day after a majority of my constituents wished another to fill the place I now hold; but I am not to be deterred from a faithful discharge of my duty to our State by the assaults of envious enemies or the aspirations of those who wish to force themselves into the place I now occupy."³²

In a letter written in Washington May 7, 1838, and printed in the Indianapolis *Indiana Democrat*, Tipton declined to consider a third term in the Senate. He had received many letters from members of both the Whig and Democratic parties, asking him to run for another term. His principal reason for refusing was his desire to superintend the education of his children. In this letter he mentioned the fact that, although he was a devout Democrat, many Whigs had supported him.³³ Such diverse papers as the Logansport *Herald* and the Richmond *Wayne Chronicle* supported him.

In the latter part of the summer and the early fall of 1838 Tipton won great praise for his success in removing the Pottawatomies from their lands in Indiana to their new home beyond the Mississippi. By a treaty made in 1832 the Pottawatomies had sold all claims to land in Indiana except a few small reservations. These reservations had been bought up by Colonel Abel C. Pepper, who had been appointed by Jackson for the purpose in 1836. By a treaty made in 1836, the Indians had reserved the right to stay on this land two years. The time was up August 5, 1838, but the Indians would not give up to the settlers who demanded possession. A quarrel followed. The Indians chopped down the door of a Mr. Waters and threatened his life; the whites burned ten or twelve Indian cabins.³⁴

³² Logansport *Herald*, April 19, 1838.

³³ Logansport *Telegraph*, June 9, 1838.

³⁴ Logansport *Herald*, November 15, 1838.

Colonel Abel C. Pepper, Indian Agent, wrote a letter from Logansport to Governor David Wallace telling of this trouble on the Pottawatomie Reservation and asking the Governor to send him an officer with 100 volunteers. Wallace the next day wrote to John Tipton, authorizing him to take command of a company of volunteers and report to Pepper.

Tipton immediately proceeded to organize the corps, informing the Governor that being a United States senator he would accept no pay for his services. He left Logansport, August 28, for Chippewa, where he stayed until 3 o'clock the next day. He arrived at Twin Lake, August 30, at 11:30 o'clock. Here he found Pepper holding a conference with the chiefs of all the Pottawatomies east of the Mississippi. They gave no explanation to Tipton of their recent conduct. The next day, August 31, Tipton organized his volunteers with the following officers: David Evans, major; N. D. Grover, E. A. Hannegan and Joseph Holman, captains; S. Lasselle and James Nash, first lieutenants; Samuel B. Linton, second lieutenant; William Wilson, Washington Holman and Charles McClure, ensigns; Job B. Eldridge, lieutenant, and Benjamin H. Smith ensign of the volunteer dragoons.

September 1 and 2 a number of the Pottawatomies came to Tipton with their families and property, expressing a desire to move beyond the Mississippi. At 2 o'clock on the afternoon of September 2, Tipton began enrolling them, and by sunset had enrolled 700. The next day he enrolled 47 more and began to load the Indians' baggage in his thirteen army wagons. Early on the morning of September 4 they left Twin Lake, and got to Chippewa by sunset, where they were joined by a few more Indians. At 9 o'clock September 5 they left Chippewa. The Indians had only 280 horses, so that many of the women and old men went on foot.

At the encampment at Logansport, September 8, 1838, Tipton discharged the volunteers under Captain Holman and Lieutenant Eldridge. The dragoons under Ensign B. H. Smith's command went with the Indians.³⁵

September 18, 1838, near Sandusky Point, Illinois, Tipton delivered his Indians, 859 in all, to his uncle, Judge William Polke, who had been appointed to conduct them to their new homes.

September 20 Tipton discharged all the men except fourteen dragoons under Ensign Smith, who were to accompany Judge Polke. Tipton received much commendation for the manner in

³⁵ Logansport *Herald*, November 8, 1838.

which he accomplished this removal of the Indians without any bloodshed.³⁶

March 3, 1839, Tipton's term in the Senate expired. He retired to his home in Logansport, hoping to enjoy the private life he desired so much. His death occurred a little more than a month later, April 5, his stubborn courage having given way at the death of his wife a few days before.

In private life General Tipton was an energetic, public-spirited citizen. He was a magnificent specimen of the pioneer, more like Boone, Kenton, Clark, or Jo. Daviess than like the elder Harrison and Lincoln. His proud haughty nature was an evidence of his early life and training among slave owners. Two cities of Indiana enjoyed his patronage, yet at his death in neither of them, Logansport nor Columbus, could it be said that he was popular. The following paragraph, written by Senator Tipton thirty-nine days before his death, in answer to a personal attack by one of his neighbors, will show both sides of his character:

For the information of the people who have settled in the vicinity since 1830, I submit the following remarks and call on those who were here at an earlier day to correct any errors into which my recollection of transactions long since gone by may lead me.

When the town plat was surveyed in 1828, I advised the proprietors to sell lots very low—from fifty to seventy-five dollars,—and to receive in payment manufactured articles or labor of the mechanic. If Mr. B. [author of the article attacking him. However, it was Williamson Wright and not Mr. B.] will inquire of C. Carter, H. B. McKeen, Colonel Ewing, and C. Taber they can inform him that I paid \$50 for the lot on which General Grover now lives, and gave it to the first physician who settled in town, and \$75 for the lot on which Washington Hall was erected, and gave it to a person provided he would establish a tavern thereon. The records will tell who paid most of the money for the erection of the seminary, teacher's house and other public buildings, and to establishing printing presses in town. The very respectable religious societies who have built the chapel and churches in town will, I hope, not think it indecorous in me to refer the inquisitive to them for proof of what I have done to assist them. Not a public building has been erected in town to which I have not contributed, and I state it as my firm belief that I have advanced more money and property to public objects than any twenty men in town. I challenge Mr. B. to investigate the matter—the materials are within his reach to enable him to ascertain the facts, and if I have not contributed more than himself and any other nineteen men in town, then I promise to do so as soon as it can be shown that I am in error in this matter.

But enough of this! Why should I spend time in combating an anonymous scribbler before a community who heard a stupid dolt in the form of a

³⁶ For a detailed account of this see article by Logan Esary in *Indianapolis News*, October 28, 1912.

man, professing to belong to that most honorable profession, the *law*, in town meeting, when the subject under consideration was the propriety of securing a city charter, declare that his object in going in for the measure was to reach my property around town with a tax for the benefit of the corporation. I cannot, will not believe that a majority of my neighbors possess such fiend-like feelings to me. . . .

While I was a public man I freely admitted the right of every citizen to investigate the conduct of their public servants and paid but little attention to ill-natured remarks thrown out against me; but, having retired from all public concerns to my farm in sight of the village where I had hoped to live in peace and expect to die, I feel that I am one of the humblest of the humble citizens of our county. Yet I will guard my reputation with the same tenacity now that I did thirty-one years ago when I first entered Indiana territory an orphan boy, in pursuit of fortune and fame. And he that assails me may expect a manly resistance.³⁷

The letter is entirely characteristic. He went far afield in search of quarrels. He expected his leadership to stand unchallenged. His experience with the founders of the city of Columbus, to which place he had moved soon after the close of the War of 1812 is evidence. Unable to impress his leadership on the founders of the village, so the tradition goes, and angered perhaps because they changed the name from Tiptona to Columbus, Tipton quit the town, for which he had donated part of his land, and vowed never to set foot on its streets again.

Tipton was married twice. His first wife was his cousin, Jennie Shields, a daughter of John Shields, a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Of their two children, Speier Spencer Tipton graduated at West Point and was killed in the Mexican war, and Matilda died in her eighteenth year while in school. His second wife was the daughter of his old captain, Speier Spencer. She was the niece of Judge William Polk and as a small child had been carried into captivity by the Indians, and with her mother, brothers and sisters, spending a year in captivity, with the Indians in and around Detroit. They had three children, two of whom died in California in the '60s. The third lived at Logansport, where his descendants still reside.

John Tipton became a member of Pisgah Lodge of Free Masons soon after he came to Corydon. September 14, 1820, he was elected Grand Master of the State Lodge, the third to fill that position. He was reelected November 28, 1828. When he moved to Logansport he helped to organize a society of Masons, which, in his honor, was named Tipton Lodge.

³⁷ Logansport *Herald*, February 28, 1839.

In many respects Tipton was a remarkable man. His life was picturesque. Among the Indians, in the camps, or in the humble cabins of the rough pioneers, he was at home. As an Indian agent he ranks with George Rogers Clark and Anthony Wayne. At the Treaty Grounds his imperious manner held the Indians in submission. His lack of education, if there was a lack, was so far overcome in after life that he was at no disadvantage in the United States Senate, where he associated with General Cass, Presidents Van Buren and Jackson and Senators Benton and Clay on easy and equal terms. He had little time for the more polished members from the East. He was not an elegant or eloquent speaker, but usually went directly to the point. He could not stand the lash of criticism, and for that reason rarely engaged in debate. He had no patience with policy or evasion. He was an ardent Jackson man, but when that President refused to sign a bill to improve the navigation of the Wabash, after having signed one to improve the Tennessee, Tipton laid the cudgels on him without hesitation. In politics he was so liberal that at this day we hardly know how to classify him. He supported Clay, Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Cass, the tariff, internal improvements, and especially Jackson's Indian policy. He was a law to himself in politics and recognized no master.